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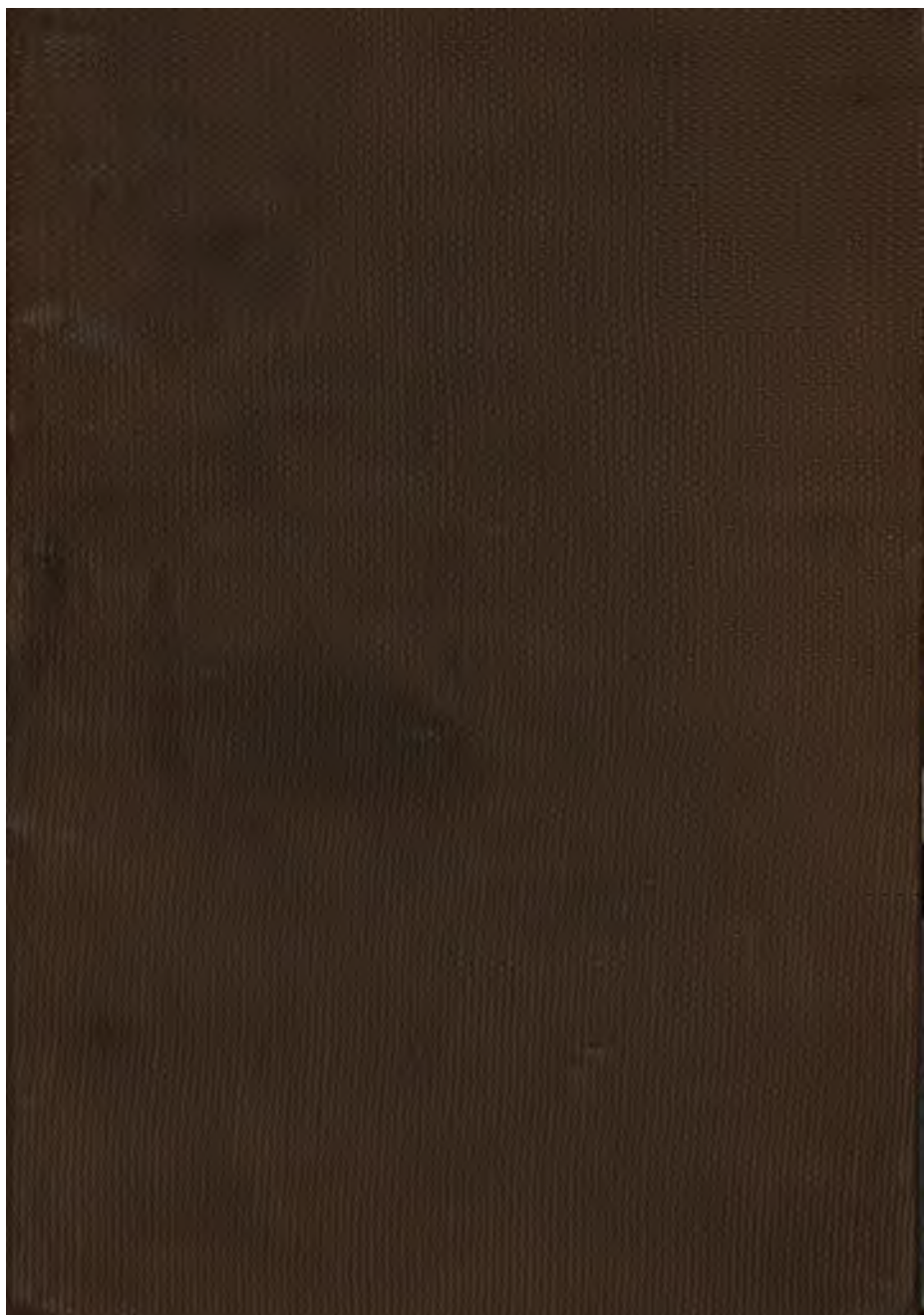
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DOVE COTTAGE

WORDSWORTH'S HOME FROM 1800—1808

DECEMBER 21, 1799

TO

MAY —, 1808

BY

STOPFORD A. BROOKE

London

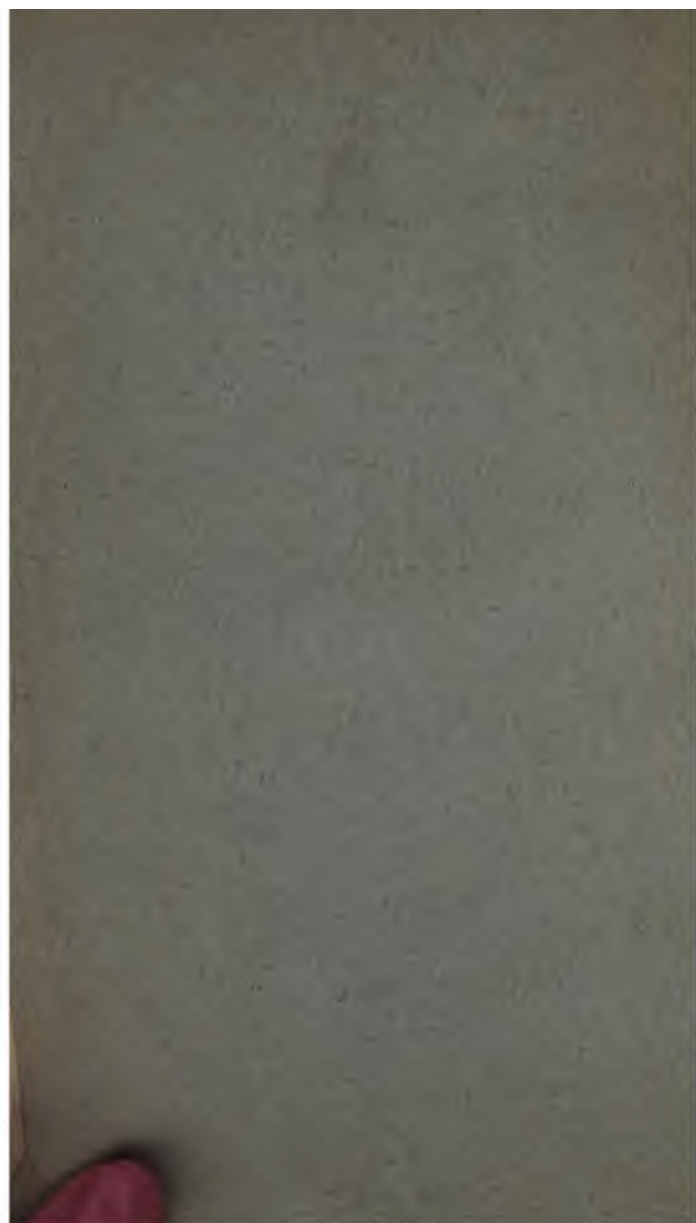
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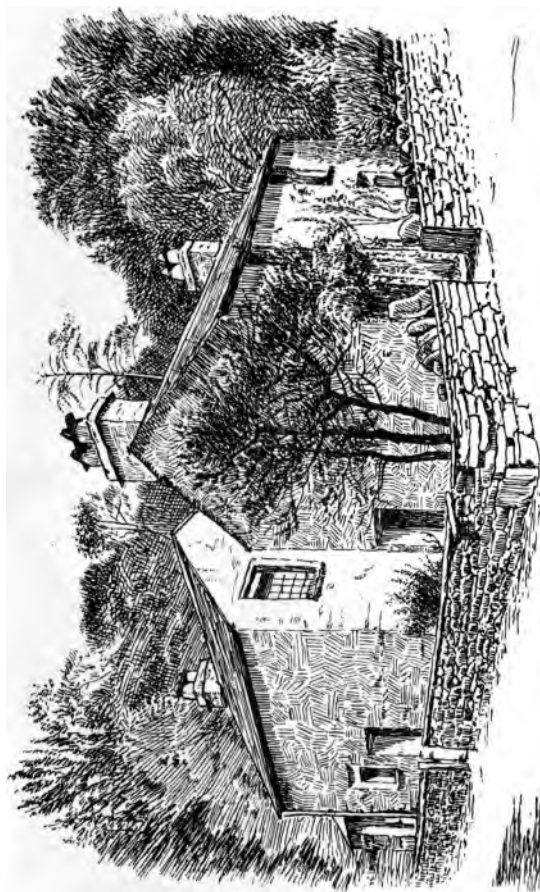
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Price One Shilling



DOVE COTTAGE





DOVE
COTTAGE,
GRASNIERE

The. D. M. J. G. 1890

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Prof. T. W. Fawcett

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,
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DOVE COTTAGE

WHEN I was staying last year at Grasmere I went with my brother to see Dove Cottage, Wordsworth's home from Dec. 1799 to May 1808 ; the little house which also received the name of " Town End " from its being the outlier of the cluster of buildings which made up, in the Wordsworths' time, the hamlet of Grasmere. We had walked up to Easdale Tarn in the morning and the whole of that lovely and joyous piece of poetry in which Wordsworth describes the delightful goings on of the Easdale stream on that " April morning " was in our ears as we stood by the wooden gate which opens on to the low-roofed porch. It seemed that he and his sister Dorothy were standing with us and that we heard him say to her, " Come in : I will dictate to you the verses I made to-day in Easdale." And in our mind's eye we saw

the place as it was in his time. There were no houses then between the gate and the lake; green fields stretched down to its greener waters, and a winding path led across the fields to the fringe of stones and reeds which, bordering the lake, defines the little point among the copse-wood that Wordsworth called Point Rash-Judgment. Beyond the shore and sleeping quietly on the water lay the island with its tall pines and solitary barn, and on the other side the hill rose abruptly, red with autumn fern and grey with rocks. The ridge of Loughrigg crowned it, and across it ran the terrace where Wordsworth walked at eventide. To the right was Silverhow, and the white wedge of Easdale Fall among the tumbled hills, and Helm-crag where sat the Ancient Woman and the Astrologer; while in the valley underneath the white cottages of Grasmere village, plunged in trees, stood around the low grey tower of the church like sheep around the shepherd. Then we saw the road to Dunmailraise run straight up the hill, past "The Swan," and coming down to meet it the last slope of the spur of Fairfield, and the huge shoulder of Seat Sandal, and the gorge of Greenhead Ghyll.

Towering above the cottage was the jutting rock of Arthur's Chair and the dark summit of Great Rigg, and then, stretching away to Rydal, the descending ridge of Nab Scar—a lovely land, scarcely a rock, or slope of grass, or sheep-fed nook of which had not heard Wordsworth murmuring his poems. Nor was the road on which we stood less full of sentiment and recollection. It was then the only road between Grasmere and Ambleside. It went straight up the hill to the pool where Wordsworth met the Leechgatherer. White-Moss, a tossed and broken height of knolls of rock and grass and pools, jutted out from the top of this hill between the lakes of Grasmere and Rydal. Up the road, and to the highest point of the Moss, was a favourite stroll of Wordsworth and his sister when the sun was setting, for thence they saw both the lakes, the mountain ranges above Windermere, and, beyond Grasmere, all the secret place over Easdale, where Nature, in her wild alchemy, made the mountain rains, and whence she sent forth her storms. In no place is there a greater business of the elements.

But the ridges of the Moss had yet more human associations, for lying underneath there was the

pine grove where John Wordsworth paced to and fro, remembering his ship at sea, and made the path among the trees, of which his brother wrote the poem. There, evening after evening, Dorothy rested and William built his verse. There is not a line of all the poems made on his brother's fate which is not linked by sentiment to this quiet piece of woodland, the very thrushes of which were dear to him.

It was down this road, down the hill, that the "Waggoner" came, and regretted that the cottage of the Wordsworths' was no longer the wayside inn it had been, whose sign of the "Dove and Olive Bough" gave the name of Dove Cottage to the poet's home. The famous horses stopped almost of their own accord before the gate at which now we stood. We lifted the latch, passed underneath the porch still covered with wild flowers, regretted the loss of the elder tree which once hung all its flowers over the wall, and stepped into "the little semi-vestibule which prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage."¹ It was an oblong square, not above eight

¹ This is De Quincey's description of the house as he saw it when in 1807 he visited the Wordsworths for the first time. In 1806 he

and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad, very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was, a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes embowered at almost every season of the year with a profusion of jasmine and other fragrant shrubs."

The room is much the same as it was then. No fatal change has been made in it; but it is now uncared for; no sentiment presides over it; it is hard to see the ghosts that as evening falls must inhabit it; and though the flowers still grow by the window, there is no hand as delicate and loving as Dorothy's to train and nourish them. It struck us with great pity that England had no care for this little spot of earth to which she owed so much.

From this lower room, "we mount a flight of stairs (again I quote De Quincey), fourteen in all,

had come to the lakes, desirous of seeing Wordsworth, but was too shy to fulfil his wish. "I caught one hasty glimpse," he says, "of the loveliest of landscapes with its little white cottage gleaming from the midst of trees, and retreated like a guilty thing." In 1807 however, "he lifted the latch" of the gate.

See the note at the end for De Quincey's after connexion with Dove Cottage.

to a little drawing-room. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his—

Half kitchen and half parlour fire.

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and in other respects pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess a library of perhaps 300 volumes which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room, and such occasionally it was."

Underneath this small recess is still the "nice elbow place where William might sit for the picture of John Bunyan." So says Dorothy in her journal, and this recess was filled with its bookshelves during their occupation. The mantelpiece remains, large enough to be adorned with "the mosses and flowers" which the Wordsworths brought back from their mountain excursions. The window and its seat opens still upon a lovely view. On the same floor was Wordsworth's bedroom, whence, when he was restless with composing, he came down to visit his sister who slept a little below and to read to her his verses; to which she came when he could not sleep, and read to him Ben Jonson, Shakspeare, Spenser, Milton, or his own poems.

Near it were the tiny guest rooms where John Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and De Quincey slept so often—sacred places. One of these rooms was built during their occupation. It was planned by Wordsworth and his sister, as they sat in the orchard. It is shaped by their very thought.

Underneath are the small offices, and the kitchen where Mary Wordsworth so often was, and the long stone-floored room where Wordsworth sometimes chopped the wood for the house, where Dorothy washed her own and her brother's clothes, and where she fulfilled so many other of the quiet duties of the poor. The whole house is perfumed with their memories.

A still greater crowd of associations pressed round us, as, descending the stairs, we entered into the garden. There in front, on the eastern side, are the "two yew trees still breaking the glare of the white walls;" and, trained over the low wall, many of the plants, rosemary and sweet-smelling herbs, the boxwood, the gowans, that the Wordsworths planted with their own hands. Turning the corner of the house, we came into the little walled space behind it rising up the side of the hill, and there was scarcely a square foot of the

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hallowed ground which did not bloom with memories like flowers. It remains almost as it was left by Wordsworth when, in 1808, he went away from it to Allan Bank. The grass shelves upwards from the cottage door over the natural rock, which still, here and there, breaks through the short sweet verdure. In this rock, for convenience of access to a small terrace above, Wordsworth himself and John Fisher his neighbour cut rough steps, and these steps, which the eager labour of the poet made, as yet remain untouched. Halfway up is the piece of rock which Coleridge discovered and worked into a seat. To us, who loved them, it was a thing full of thought and pleasure to walk upon the steps and to sit on the rocky chair. Among the rocks, when spring is near, the daffodils spring up and toss their heads, children of the flowers which he and his sister planted with their own hands. Underneath the grass flows the rill that fed the well, "a hidden brook," such as Coleridge tells of in the *Ancient Mariner*, "its quiet soul on all bestowing," which those who listened in the summer stillness could hear from out the rocky ground

Strike its solitary sound.

Below is the well which gives water to the cottage and which it was Wordsworth's pleasure to keep clear and bright. The primroses they planted still grow among the stones—a coronal of beauty. Round it once were also Christmas roses which Wordsworth set in the ground, but which have now been transferred to another side of the garden. It would be easy to replace them, for they bloom brightly where they are.

Along the terrace walk, and down the sides of the grass, making a "sunshiny shade," the apple trees of the orchard still cluster and are full of blossom in the spring. "The short terrace at the top is curved, with a sloping bank of grass above, shaded by apple trees, hazel, laburnum, holly, laurel, and mountain ash."¹ Over the bank is a rude wall, built up and planted by Wordsworth himself, every interstice of which he filled with fern, and beyond the wall, a dark wood climbs the hill. The view is lovely, looking over Grasmere village and the lake. At the end of the terrace was once the harbour which

¹ In Professor Knight's *Life of Wordsworth*, and his *Edition of the Poems*, much interesting matter will be found concerning Dove Cottage.

Wordsworth built with his own hands, and where day by day, and often in the depth of winter, he sat and wrote. It would be easy, from the description he has left, to set up such an arbour, where those who know the poems he wrote beneath its covert might sit and read them in the summer stillness.

"There is no place," we said, "which has so many thoughts and memories as this belonging to our poetry; none at least in which they are so closely bound up with the poet and the poems; almost everything in this garden has been written of beautifully; almost every flower has been planted by his or his sister's hands; in almost every tree some bird has built of which he has sung. In every part of this little place he has walked with his sister and wife or talked with Coleridge. And it is almost untouched. Why should we not try and secure it, as Shakspeare's birthplace is secured, for the eternal possession of those who love English poetry all over the world?" And we agreed to try, and as we walked back to the inn drew up the scheme an abstract of which I give below.

The first thing to find out was whether we could buy the place, and we discovered, that

night, that it had been bought a few months before by a gentleman of Bradford, Mr. Lee, who had written a pleasant and graceful book on Dorothy Wordsworth. We wrote to him, stating our desire and plans, and received a letter in return, which said that he would, for such a purpose, willingly sell the freehold for £650. We then wrote to Professor Knight of St. Andrews, who heartily concurred in the scheme and promised to bring it before the members of the late Wordsworth Society, and we now submit it to all those to whom the work and memory of the poet are dear, both in these islands, in our colonies, and among our brothers and sisters in America.

Our Committee then proposes to purchase, by means of a national subscription, at the price of £650, the fee-simple of Dove Cottage as a memorial of Wordsworth, and to secure it under a trust for the pleasure and good of the English race; and we calculate that for £350 more, that is, for £1,000 altogether, we could set the place in complete order, plant and clean the garden, repair the roof of the house, and put enough furniture into it to give it a pleasant air of occupation. The house is but little altered,

and it would be easy, without any attempt at restoration, to arrange it as it was in Wordsworth's time. The garden, with the exception of the moss house on the terrace, remains nearly as Wordsworth left it. We should propose to rebuild the arbour—all moss-houses are of the same type—and to plant the garden with the flowers which the Wordsworths loved. We know from Dorothy's diary what these were, and the very position which they occupied.

Adjoining the cottage, on the left-hand side, as one stands at the gate, and included in the purchase, is a plot of ground at present occupied by a large unsightly barn. This barn would be taken down, and its site when converted into a grassy sward, and planted with a few trees, would isolate the cottage, and its possession will enable the trustees to secure that this isolation should be permanent. In the space thus created the wild flowers Wordsworth loved would grow of their own sweet will. Planted thus with trees and flowers, it would be a gracious and quiet retreat in which to read the poems dedicated to this valley. This green spot, then, with a few seats beneath the trees, the little cottage

beside it, with its orchard-garden, would form, standing together, a pretty and historic group, and recall, amidst the newer Grasmere, the homely mountain village of the last century. At present there is a tenant in the cottage, but possession can be obtained on a six months' notice.

With regard to the management and maintenance of the property, it is proposed to follow the convenient and safe guide of the Trust under which Shakspeare's birthplace is held at Stratford-on-Avon. That house was bought by a national subscription and vested in a body of Trustees, and the success of the management is known to be admirable.

Mr. Lee will then convey the property to a Board of Trustees, who will be (as in the case of Shakspeare's birthplace) partly persons of standing and influence in the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, many of whom are connected with the Wordsworths by family or friendship; and partly other persons, not belonging to the locality, who, by their literary or professional eminence or by their known love of Wordsworth's poetry, would be considered suitable. These would hold office

for life, and as the Board would be a large one, the necessity for a fresh deed to vest the property in new Trustees would seldom arise.

Under the Board of Trustees, a small Committee of Management (and this follows, as before, the precedent set at Stratford-on-Avon) would be appointed, meeting occasionally, and consisting of ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood willing to serve for this purpose. They would derive their powers from the Board; they would be charged with the supervision and superintendence of the Trust property, the management of the Funds, the appointment and dismissal of the caretaker of the Cottage, and other officials; and they would report their action and submit their accounts to the annual meeting of the Board. This roughly indicates the relation of the Board to the Committee of Management; but a more precise arrangement of the powers of the Board and of the local Committee would form one of the first subjects for consideration.

The promoters are of opinion that there will be more than enough money received from visitors to support the cottage and garden, when once

they have been bought and put in order. The example of Shakespere's Memorial leaves little doubt on this point. The admission fee to the Birthplace at Stratford is sixpence, and to the Museum sixpence, and the yearly revenue from these charges amounts to a sum considerably in excess of all the expenses. We should propose to charge the same sum for admission to Dove Cottage. Thousands of persons pass through Grasmere every year, sometimes three or four hundred a day during the season. The coaches run by the very gate of Dove Cottage, and stop at the hotel within two minutes' walk of it. A great number of travellers stay to see the church and graves, to walk to the Wishing Gate, and to visit Easdale, Lancrigg, and the Loughrigg Terrace. They would readily pay their sixpences to see the home and garden of Wordsworth, and if from this fee we received an income of even £60 a year, it would be sufficient to keep up the place. In time to come, the interest would be greatly increased by a Wordsworth Library, and by many memorials of the poet which have been already promised to us. Rydal Mount has not the same romantic and youthful interest as this Cottage, nor was the work

done there of the same quality as that which grew into form in these small rooms, in the garden, and the orchard. Moreover, the Mount is jealously shut up from the public. There is no place, indeed, intimately associated with Wordsworth, which is open, except the churchyard where he is buried.

To Mr. Lee, whose interest and affection for Wordsworth have been proved by his frank consent to sell the property, no small thanks we think are due for the chance he has given to the English-speaking peoples of securing this little nook of earth as an eternal possession, and we confidently recommend the scheme to all lovers of poetry.

Such is the proposition, and we hope we shall get names and money enough to push it through. As soon as we receive the names of those willing to join, we shall issue from time to time a list of them, and acknowledge the subscriptions, and immediately afterwards an Organizing Committee will be established. A number of well-known persons have already promised their support, and we have no doubt that many among the late Wordsworth Society will join. But we hope that we shall gain our best assistance in a large sub-

scription from the body of men and women to whom Wordsworth's poetry has been, in the noises, sickness and trouble of life, quiet and healing and strength.

It remains to add other reasons why this purchase should be made and the place secured for posterity—reasons drawn from the associations, personal, literary, and moral, which gather round this cottage, from the poetic sentiment which abides in it, and from its preciousness to English-speaking men and women over the whole world.

Within the walls of this cottage, and on its garden ground, to speak first of Persons, a number of folk whose names are household words in literature, lived for a time a life of grave simplicity and of love of letters. Other places in England are also connected with their names, but we do not find ourselves elsewhere so closely bound up with these visitors as we are in the cottage rooms of the Wordsworths, or in the garden, which was so small that they seem cloistered in it for our quiet observation. It is easier here than at Coleorton for the imagination to picture Coleridge, and De Quincey is more present to the mind's eye in the wainscoted room where first he saw the elfin face

of Dorothy, than in the homes of the literary magnates of Edinburgh. Moreover, the persons who came to the cottage have been beautifully written of. When Dorothy speaks of her friends, they become instinct with life ; when Wordsworth writes of them in verse, they seem to become children of eternity.

The whole place is alive with Coleridge before his trouble deepened, and it was on Dorothy that the terrible sadness of his life fell hardest. Her affection for him was great, her misery for his breakdown, both of health and moral power, was equally great. The rooms of Dove Cottage and the garden saw her bitter grief and heard her tears. Thither, too, before that time he came continually striding over from Keswick, or from the high gorges of the hills—

Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height ;
Oft could we see him driving full in view
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright ;

Sometimes it was to remain day after day ;
sometimes it was but to come and go—

Seek for him,—he is fled ; and whither none can say.

We catch one picture of him from the Grasmere Diary, when he marched into the room with his sack full of books, and a branch of mountain ash in his hand ; and another when he came over Helvellyn, arriving at 11 P.M., when Dorothy is walking in the clear still moonshine. It was at the fire in the upper room that she often cooked his dinner for him. It was there that he first read out - "Christabel" to Wordsworth—and read it again and again. That association alone sanctifies the place. It was there that Wordsworth read out to him after tea "The Pedlar"—a general name given to the "Excursion," but which refers here either to the first book or to that of the "Solitary." It was there that he listened to Lamb's letters on the "Lyrical Ballads ;" it was there that they read together Milton, Ben Jonson and all the old dramatists, of which a store were in the recess above the chair of Wordsworth ; it was there that they were "very merry" till half the night was passed. It was over the blazing fire of logs that Dorothy and Coleridge often sat talking till three in the morning, for she was a very late person ; and when the moon was high it not unfrequently saw her and Coleridge pacing up and down the little

path above the orchard, till the night had far gone and the dawn began to appear. Morning after morning he haunted the orchard and the garden, reciting his verses, listening to William's new poems, hearing Dorothy read out the Elizabethan poets, talking of them in his torrent-way; and once these three read together—and it must have been a wonderful hour—the “Epithalamium” of Spenser. I can fancy as she read, the “shooting lights of her wild eyes,” and the stern joy of the two poets in verse so worthy of their own. Often he lay on the grass full length under the apple trees, and it was on such a day that Wordsworth pictured him in the stanzas written on a fly-leaf of Thomson's “Castle of Indolence”—

Down would he sit ; and without strength or power,
Look at the common grass from hour to hour :
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay ;
And like a naked Indian, slept himself away.¹

I know no place in the world, no, not even Alfoxden, so bound up with Coleridge in his

¹ I have adopted the view that these verses refer to Coleridge. On the whole, I think this view the most probable. But many, and persons of great repute and intelligence, refer them to Wordsworth himself.

early time while still he could write "Christabel"—and the homely and gracious touches with which Dorothy paints him enable us to see him as he was to those who loved him, with whom he was happy as the day—

For never sun on living creature shone
Who more devout enjoyment with us took :
Here on his hours he hung as on a book,
On his own time here would he float away,
As doth a fly upon a summer brook ;

All the pity of his fate, all the pity of his want of will, all the pity of his ill-fortuned habits clusters here ; and in this garden broke from Dorothy that sorrowful cry, "Every sight and sound reminds me of Coleridge ; dear, dear fellow, of his many talks to us, by day and night, of all dear things. I was melancholy and could not talk, but at last I eased my heart by weeping. * * * O ! how many, many reasons have I to be anxious for him."

But not only Coleridge walks in this house and garden. Here Hartley played up and down among the trees ; the happy child, who fitted to unutterable thought

The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol.

—hither too came the small thin figure of De Quincey; the dark face with its subtle changing mouth, and his eyes half slumber, half fire; and here his tongue fled to and fro over his subject—"his volant touch"—for I liken his talk to Milton's organ player—


Instinct through all proportions low and high
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.

Here Southey came; and "Thalaba" was read aloud in this garden; and Wordsworth listened to the scholar, and wondered, I sometimes think, how he became a poet. Here frequently came Clarkson—"the man," says Dorothy, with a fine feminine carelessness, "who took so much pains about the slave trade." Here Charles Lloyd sat and discoursed, and perhaps read his poems; and here William Calvert talked with Wordsworth of the brother to whom the poet owed so deep a debt of gratitude. Often, too, in parlour and in orchard, that patron of the arts, Sir Geo. Beaumont, himself somewhat of an artist, one of whose pictures is immortalized in a poem among the very noblest Wordsworth ever wrote—was seen pacing up and down the narrow pathway, and talking with

Wordsworth of landscape gardening—a figure we are happy to see here, for he was kind, and his kindness was as frank as it was generous. Nor must we forget the keen, sweet face of Humphrey Davy, whose gracious playfulness of temper and quick eye charmed the women of the household. One great figure and noble face we also can place here and see moving to and fro—endeared to Wordsworth, “the whole world’s Darling.” Walter Scott and his wife visited the Wordsworths in 1805, and all the associations of the place receive another ennoblement. It was at this time that Davy, and Wordsworth, and Scott ascended Helvellyn together.

Old Helvellyn’s brow,
Where once together, in his day of strength,
We stood rejoicing as if earth were free
From sorrow, like the sky above our heads.

They started from this cottage, they returned to it, and Dorothy and Mary welcomed them to tea. It is a happy picture with which to fill the upper room, and sorely must they have been crowded in it. But how gay the evening would be, how happy Wordsworth, how the Wizard’s rugged brow shone in the firelight, and how great the meeting of



these two men who in prose and poetry have mastered the common human heart. When all the visitors swim away from our eyes, we still see in the quiet sacredness of home, Dorothy flashing in and out, the three children playing around Wordsworth as he wrote, and among them, moving quietly, "her eyes like stars of twilight fair," Mary "the phantom of delight."

Were it for Dorothy's sake alone, the cottage and garden would seem to be worth a pilgrimage to all who have been taught by Wordsworth. For she was his most faithful helper, almost his inspiration. All lovers of English poetry owe her a deep debt of gratitude. She wrote but little verse herself, for she had not the formative power; but she had the power of seeing subjects for song, and of feeling them profoundly, and they were such subjects as were fitted for the distinctive and shaping genius of Wordsworth. In her daily talk with him, in the records of her journal were the roots out of which grew many of his most sensitive poems. And Wordsworth himself loved her for her help, and honoured her beyond all living things.

In all literature there is nothing to equal in fervour and sacred passion of love his acknowledgments

to Dorothy. In this cottage, every room of which her presence fills, in this orchard garden, every flower of which breathes of her, she is alive and delightful, and beloved for evermore. We see her as she is in her brother's poetry—"his dearest friend," "my dear, dear sister," in whose voice

I catch

The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes,

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk,
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee ; and in after years
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies—

Surely no woman was ever praised so well. Nor are these lines, which belong to the time before Grasmere, the only ones which picture her. In the "Recluse," which relates his first coming to the Valley, and how, with him, peacefully embowered,

Under yon orchard, in yon humble cot,
The only daughter of my parents dwells,

he breaks forth into a lovely passage, in which she becomes at one with all the beautiful motions of

the universe, and yet profoundly, passionately his own—

Aye—think on that, my heart, and cease to stir ;
Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.
O ! if such silence be not thanks to God
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then,
Shall gratitude find rest ? Mine eyes did ne'er
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,
But either she whom now I have, who now
Divides with me this loved abode, was there,
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang,
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an *unseen* companionship, a breath
Of fragrance independent of the wind.
In all my goings, in the new and old
Of all my meditations, and in this
Favourite of all, in this the most of all.

In Grasmere, in this cottage where he lived alone
with her, in those first years of which he wrote
in the “ Recluse,” she was all in all to him—

The blessing of my later years
Was with me when I was a boy ;
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares and delicate fears,
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
And love, and thought, and joy.

There too, when writing the “ Prelude ” in this
cottage, after his marriage, it is still his sister who

is the charm and help and genius of his life. He looks back on all she did for him when she adorned and softened his rugged nature ; when, in his hour of doubt, and of worse than doubt, of mere intellectual consideration of Man and Nature, she maintained for him a saving intercourse with his true self, and preserved him still a poet ; and he cannot refrain from another outburst of delight in her nature—

Birds in the bower and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved ;
methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
The flowers and trees and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself ,
Towards them and to all creatures.

Later on, after his marriage, two other poems, "I met Louisa in the shade," and "To a Young Lady," are alive with this intensity of love and gratitude which breathes through all he wrote of his sister. No subtler yet simpler compliment was ever written to a woman than this verse—

And she hath smiles to earth unknown ;
Smiles, that with motion of their own
Do spread, and sink, and rise ;
That come and go with endless play
And ever, as they pass away,
Are hidden in her eyes.

The verse is of 1805, and was omitted in 1845. I cannot understand why, unless it was that Wordsworth did not like "Do spread and sink and rise," and well he might dislike it. But he might have altered it, and kept the rest, which is woven so fine, and is as subtle and lovely as a summer cloud.

This is the figure which, as much as Wordsworth's, haunts this cottage; and we have her pictured not only by the brother who loved her, but by the friend who admired her—by that affectionate yet acute pencil which in prose obeyed so well the interweaving intellect of De Quincey.

I might be content to leave Mrs. Wordsworth as described by her husband, and to fill the cottage with that image—

Her eyes like stars of twilight fair,
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair,
But all things else about her drawn
From Maytime and the cheerful dawn.

and in the rest of the exquisite lyric; yet it is impossible not to quote a few words from De Quincey's study of her, where in this place he saw her first:—"From the doorway of the upper room opening on a small staircase, two

ladies entered the room. The foremost, a tallish young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity on her features, advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth." Then, describing certain faults in her appearance, he adds:—"Had they been ten times more and greater, they would have been neutralized by that supreme expression of her features, to the unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts of her countenance, concurred—viz., a sunny benignity, a radiant graciousness—such as in this world I never saw surpassed."

Then he turns to Dorothy. "Immediately behind her moved a lady, shorter, slighter, and perhaps in all other respects as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished for the most effective contrast. Her face was of Egyptian brown; rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determined gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold, but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their

motion.¹ Her manner was warm and even ardent, her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep ; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression of the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict, that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered in point of clearness and steadiness from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility."

He speaks then of her stammer which sometimes appeared, of all she had been to her brother, of her ways of walking, and, adds, " I may mention her

¹ 'This fine description of Dorothy's eyes—and indeed breadth and subtlety there is in the whole description—makes me desire to quote that passage about Wordsworth's eyes which contains in it, as it were, the impassioned essence of Wordsworth himself :—

"His eyes are not, under any circumstances, bright, lustrous or piercing ; but, after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light, but under favourable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from unfathomed depths : in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held, 'The light that never was on land or sea,'—a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any the most idealizing that ever yet a painter's hand created."

exceeding sympathy—always ready and always profound, by which she made all that one could tell her, all that one could describe, all that one could quote from a foreign author, reverberate, as it were, *à plusieurs reprises*, to one's own feelings, by the manifest impression it made upon *hers*. The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular and thoroughly unsystematic. She was content to be ignorant of many things, but what she knew and had really mastered, lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart."

This "ardent and fiery creature," "the very wildest (in the sense of the most natural) person De Quincey had ever known, and also the truest and the most inevitable"—was for nearly nine years the lover of this cottage, and made it, and her heart, in it, a home for Wordsworth.

She loves her fire, her cottage home,
Yet o'er the moorland will she roam
In weather rough and bleak;
And when against the wind she strains,
Oh! might I kiss the mountain rains
That sparkle on her cheek.

The light of their mutual love, and the glory of their common work, so fills this spot of earth that it seems like sacrilege to let it perish.

One also who loved this garden must not be unmentioned. He belongs to the Home—that inner and sacred shrine which seems among the Wordsworths to be almost a living Spirit—John, “the never-resting Pilgrim of the Sea.” Often walking on this terrace at night he called Dorothy out “to look,” as a letter of hers records, “at the moon, or stars, or cloudy sky, or this vale in the quiet moonlight; but the stars and the moon were his chief delight. He made of them his companions at sea, and was never tired of those thoughts which the silence of the night fed in him. Then he was so happy by the fireside. Any little business of the house interested him. He loved our cottage. He helped us to furnish it, and to make the garden. Trees are growing now which he planted.”

He too, is fit for the imagination to picture in this place, whose walls and flowers heard the bitter weeping for him; another witness to the love that filled it—another image of peace, and joy, and duty—a “silent poet.” I wish there were many

more spots in this country as worthy of preserving for the meditation of the heart on great men and tender women, on noble conversation, on high thinking and on plain living.

But it is not only the personages whom we meet here by which the place is honourable, but the work which was here done. In this home the very best of Wordsworth's work was completed. Even the poems which were composed as he walked on the hills, on the terraces of Loughrigg and Lancrigg, were written out in this cottage by Dorothy, and, here corrected by Wordsworth. Of these I do not speak. They do not actually belong to the house and garden. But the rooms and the orchard-arbour were the proper birth-place of many others, conceived here, and here travailed with until they were finished. The very air hears their music as we stand at the window seat, or sit on the grass beneath the apple trees.

I take first the poems made in the garden. Dorothy again and again describes this little nook of rocky land which we wish to secure for England. It was wholly the work of their own hands. They enclosed it from the road, and pulled down the fence which formerly divided it from the

orchard. "It is a delightful orchard, though so small," she writes, "from its retirement and the excessive beauty of the prospect from it." The first picture she gives of the place is that she "sauntered to and fro in it, and the blackbird sat quietly on its nest, rocked by the wind and beaten by the rain." A little further on, as she was writing to Coleridge, she says, "The little birds are busy and making love (it is June 1800), and pecking the blossoms and bits of moss off the trees. They flutter about and about and beneath the trees as I lie under them." We see her then walking backwards and forwards with her brother in the orchard, and, morning after morning, in that winter time, William sat with her there, slowly working out the poem of "Michael." That great piece of work belongs to the arbour on the terrace as well as to the house. There, too, in 1802 the poem of "The Emigrant Mother" was composed one wintry morning, and on a mild afternoon in March, walking up and down the terrace, he repeated to Dorothy for the first time "The Cuckoo," the poem all our hearts have repeated. "The Robin and the Butterfly" belongs also to these trees, to the "pilewort spread out upon the grass, a thousand

shiny stars ; to the primroses and the remains of a few daffodils," which Dorothy saw before her while the poem was making, in April 1802. In the same month in this garden, he wrote the "Children gathering Flowers," and began in May the second poem on the "Celandine." I am sure that the first was at least partly composed in the garden.

In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her nest,

are lines which belonged to his own thrush, to the bird that Dorothy loved so well—"That dear thrush was singing upon the topmost of the smooth branches of the ash tree at the top of the orchard." The very aspect of the garden, when in its shades the "Leech-gatherer" was partly finished, is painted for us. "It is a sweet morning—May 6, 1802. We have put the finishing stroke to our bower, and here we are sitting in the orchard. We are sitting upon a seat under the wall which I found my brother building up when I came to him. . . . It is a nice, cool, shady spot. The small birds are singing, lambs bleating, cuckoos calling, the thrush sings by fits. Thomas Ashburnam's axe is going quietly—

without passion—in the orchard, hens are cackling, flies humming, the women talking together at their doors, plum and pear trees are in blossom, apple trees greenish, the opposite woods green, the crows are cawing—we have heard ravens, the ash trees are in blossom, birds flying all about us, the stitchwort is coming out, there is one budding *Lychnis*, the primroses are passing their prime, celandine, violets, and wood sorrel for evermore, little geraniums and pansies on the wall.” The next day the “Leech-gatherer” was finished to the music of the thrush

On Friday, the 28th of May, she describes the orchard again, and vividly. “We sat in the orchard, the sky cloudy, the air sweet and cool. The young bullfinches, in their party-coloured raiment, bustle about among the blossoms, and poise themselves like wire-dancers or tumblers, shaking the twigs and dashing off the blossoms. There is yet one primrose in the orchard. The stitchwort is fading. The vetches are in abundance, blossoming and seeding. That pretty little wavy-looking, dial-like flower, the speedwell, and some others whose names I do not yet know. The wild columbines are coming into beauty, some of the gowans fading.

In the garden we have lilies, and many other flowers. The scarlet beans are up in crowds."

This is the haunted place, and it is made still more dear to us by Wordsworth himself. There are a number of poems in which he praises his guardian nook, and all the life of birds and flowers that moved therein. "The Butterfly," April 20, 1802, describes the garden.

I've watched you now a full half hour,
Self poised upon that yellow flower,
And, little Butterfly ! indeed
I know not if you sleep or feed.
How motionless ! not frozen seas
More motionless ! and then
What joy awaits you, when the breeze
Hath found you out among the trees
And calls you forth again.
This plot of orchard ground is ours ;
My trees they are, my sister's flowers ;
Here rest your wings when they are weary ;
Here lodge as in a sanctuary !
Come often to us, fear no wrong ;
Sit near us on the bough !
We'll talk of sunshine and of song,
And summer days when we were young—
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now.

Then come, written in the orchard, the two first poems upon "The Daisy," and they were

made as he looked on the flower, where under his own apple-trees it starred the dappled grass, and "breathed with him the sun and air."

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit and play with similies,
Loose types of things through all degrees
Thoughts of thy raising.

Then, full of charm, and closelier connected with the garden than almost any other poem, is the "Green Linnet," "composed," as he says, "in the orchard, Townend, where the bird was often seen as here described." It was written in 1803, and illustrates with what an outburst of joy Wordsworth escaped from the severe work of "The Prelude" and "The Excursion" into the revel of Nature where all his closest friendships were. I quote the whole of it.

Beneath these fruit tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather.
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat !
And birds and flowers once more to greet
My last year's friends together.
One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest ;
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion !

Thou, Linnet, in thy green array,
Presiding spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May ;
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment ;
A Life, a Presence, like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair ;
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover ;
There, where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A Brother of the dancing leaves ;
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves
Pours forth his song in gushes ;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
While fluttering in the bushes.

In the same year he records the edging of the
rock in the garden,

With living snowdrops, circlet bright,
How glorious to this orchard ground !
Who loved the little Rock, and set
Upon its head this coronet ?

In 1804, in " The Kitten and the Falling Leaves," the birds and trees of his orchard are described as he saw them in a joyous hour ; when this grave man, solitary sitting in his own great world, was as gamesome as the infant that lay beside him on the grass. Through her, lost, though late, too soon, his little Dora, he entered into the impenetrable cell

Of the silent heart which Nature
Furnishes to every creature.

What touches most the place I quote :

That way look, my infant, lo !
What a pretty baby show !
See the kitten on the wall
Sporting with the leaves that fall,
Withered leaves—one, two, and three,
From the lofty elder tree.

The elder tree is gone, but it would be pleasant to replace it, and we know the exact spot. He goes on, describing with a jocund thought the game of the kitten with the leaves. Then, with a sudden turn of pensive contemplation, he turns to his orchard and thinks how much is gone—

'Tis a pretty baby treat,
Nor, I deem, for me unmeet ;
Here, for neither babe nor me,
Other playmate can I see.
Of the countless living things,
That with stir of feet or wings
(In the sun or under shade,
Upon bough or grassy blade),
And with busy revellings,
Chirp and song, and murmurings,
Make this orchard's narrow space,
And this vale so blithe a place.
Multitudes are swept away
Never more to breathe the day ;
Some are sleeping ; some in bands
Travelled into distant lands ;
Others slunk to moor and wood,
Far from human neighbourhood ;
And among the Kinds that keep
With us closer fellowship
With us openly abide,
All have laid their mirth aside.
Where is he, that giddy Sprite,
Blue-cap, with his colours bright,
Who was blest as bird could be,
Feeding in the apple tree ;
Made such wanton spoil and rout,
Turning blossoms inside out ;
Hung—head pointing towards the ground—
Fluttered, perched, into a round
Bound himself, and then unbound ;
Lithest, gaudiest Harlequin !
Prettiest Tumbler ever seen !
Light of heart and light of limb,
What is now become of Him ?

No fairy Prince could speak with more pride and joy of his palace-garden than Wordsworth has done, in all these verses, of his little spot of mountain ground. No noble preacher could speak more nobly or with more religion, of the Spirit by whose inspiration his sister planted its flowers, who, like a heavenly guest, lived in the hearts of those who loved this garden.

It is the Spirit of Paradise
That prompts such work—a spirit strong,
That gives to all the selfsame bent,
Where life is wise and innocent.

In all the work we should do in house or orchard, this is the Spirit we desire to be our guide—if only the public enable us to buy them and put them under trust for England. Our wish is to settle the place into the same simplicity it had in Wordsworth's time, to make it worthy of its innocent and sacred memories, to plant the flowers in it that Wordsworth and his sister planted, to fit them to the same places as we find them to have been fitted in the Diary and Poems—in one word, to enshrine this cottage home as a record of Wordsworth's life and work, and as a memorial of the roots of his power.

These poetic associations are even more

numerous when we enter the house. The tales of Dorothy—to take the Diary first—people the house with love and joy, and fill it with the romance of a country home.

But first, I quote her letter written on Sept. 10, 1800:—

“We are daily more delighted with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. Our walks are perpetually varied, and we are more fond of the mountains as our acquaintance with them increases. We have a boat upon the lake, and a small orchard and smaller garden, which, as it is the work of our own hands, we regard with pride and partiality. Our cottage is quite large enough for us, though very small; and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors; and it looks very nice on the outside; for though the roses and honeysuckles which we have planted against it are only of this year's growth, yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers; for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful but very useful, as their produce is immense. We have made a lodging-room of the parlour below stairs, which has a stone floor, therefore

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we have covered it all over with matting. We sit in a room above stairs, and we have one lodging-room with two single beds, a sort of lumber-room, and a small low unceiled room, which I have papered with newspapers, and in which we have put a small bed."

This is a plain and vivid picture of the interior. We then, from her Diary, see with her eyes the view from the windows. "In the morning when I arose the mists were hanging over the opposite hills, and the tops of the highest hills were covered with snow. There was a most lovely combination at the head of the vale of the yellow autumnal mists wrapped in sunshine, and overhung with partial mists, the green and yellow trees and the distant snow-topped mountains. It was a most heavenly morning."

Then comes a picture of still life. "I put aside dearest Coleridge's letters, and now at about seven o'clock we are all sitting by a nice fire—William with his book and candle, and Mary writing to Sara;" and again, "William is reading Spenser, Mary is writing beside me. The little syke murmurs. We are quiet and happy." "In the afternoon we sat by the fire; I read Chaucer aloud,

and Mary read the first canto of the 'Fairy Queen.' "Mr. Clarkson came in before tea. We played at cards. The moon shone upon the waters below the Silver How, and above it hung a bowl-shaped moon, the curve downwards; the white fields, the glittering roof of Thomas Ashburner's house, the dark yew tree, the white fields, gay and beautiful. William lay with his curtains open that he might see it." Again, "William is now sleeping with the window open, lying on the window-seat. The thrush is singing. There are, I do believe, a thousand buds on the honeysuckle tree, all small and far from blowing, save one that is retired behind the twigs close to the wall and as snug as a bird's nest." Midst of all this poetic life, we find her making pies and bread, cooking for the household, sewing and knitting beside her brother, preparing food for Coleridge, waiting dinner for Wordsworth who would not leave his poems, coming home late at night from Ambleside and reading Coleridge's letters by the fireside, sitting up with her brother till four in the morning in talk, sitting up with Coleridge and William till the dawn, sitting up with Coleridge alone, writing those long letters to him which are, so strangely,

wholly lost ; leaving at ten the house, on moon-lit nights, and pacing to and fro in the garden with her brother. "After tea," she writes, "we walked on our own path for a long time. We talked sweetly together about the disposal of our riches. We lay upon the sloping turf. Earth and sky were so lovely that they melted our very hearts. The sky to the north was of a chastened yet rich yellow, fading into pale blue and streaked and scattered over with steady islands of purple, melting away into shades of pink. It was like a vision to me."

There was a wealth of love in that woman's heart which makes the place, the garden and the rooms where she lived, a Paradise of feeling. Nor can anything prettier be bound up with her bedroom than her little tale about the swallows, which I here extract. "The swallows come to the sitting-room window as if wishing to build, but I am afraid they will not have courage for it, but I believe they will build in my room window. They twitter, and make a bustle, and a little cheerful song, hanging against the panes of glass with their soft white bellies close to the glass, and their forked fish-like tails. They swim round and round, and again they come" . . . The nest fell and was afterwards

rebuilt. "I had watched them early in the morning in the day many and many a time, and in the evenings when it was almost dark. I had seen them sitting together side by side in their unfinished nest both morning and night. . . . They fluttered and sang their own little twittering song. Every now and then there was a motion in their wings, a sort of tremulousness, and they sang a low song to one another. It is now eight o'clock. I will go and see if my swallows are on their nest. Yes! there they are, both looking down into the garden. I have been out on purpose to see their faces." On the 8th of July, 1802, this diary ends; and ends with a good-bye to her cottage as passionate as if it were a person whom she loved. Next day she was going with her brother to meet Mary Hutchinson and to witness his marriage. "O beautiful place," she cries; "dear Mary and William. The hour is come—I must prepare to go. The swallows—I must leave them, the wall, the garden, roses, all. Dear creatures, they sang last night after I was in bed; seemed to be singing to one another, just before they settled to rest for the night. Well, I must go. Farewell!"

These are quiet, homely entries, but they have


the value of individual charm, and of sweet content. Their very simplicity, their still enjoyment, endear the spot where they were written. It is impossible to read them without feeling her love to the cottage and the garden awakening in us also affection for the place. It is for that reason I have quoted them ; they will endear the house to those who visit it hereafter ; it will be peopled with those memories which are the daily blessings of common life.

And now, as before, I pass to the poems which Wordsworth wrote in the house. Their spiritual presence dignifies these rooms.

I have said that the greater part of his poetic work was, now and afterwards, done in the open air, beyond the house and garden—on the mountain sides ; marching up and down Lancrigg, whence he saw all Easdale before him ; in the Fir Grove and on White Moss ; but some poems, and those famous, are bound up with the two rooms where they sat, and especially with the room above, where they kept the needs for their evening meal, made their own tea and toast, and sat talking and writing till late at night. A thrill of pleasure, mingled with reverence, passes through our heart when we think that in this room much of “The

Recluse" was actually composed, at a time, perhaps in 1800, when all the spirit of youth in him was married to the power of song, when infinite hope was in him that he would move the world. Here too, with slight exceptions, the whole of "The Prelude" was copied by Dorothy from the sheets brought home from Lancrigg, and long and continuous work given to it. As he corrected it in this low dark room, his life from boyhood passed before him, vision after vision, and the walls opened and showed him the universe.

Morning after morning, he worked here also at books of "The Excursion," but chiefly at "The Ruined Cottage." Almost every poem published in the second volume of "The Lyrical Ballads" is bound up in thought with this room. Here he read them to Coleridge and Dorothy, here he polished their numbers, from this house he sent them to press, and here he received the volume. But some were not only corrected, but made in the house. "Michael," during the two months of its composition, was kept, it seems, for the orchard, and for the upper room in the evenings, and its connection with the house is doubled when we know that the character and circumstances of



Luke were taken from a family to whom the house had once belonged. All the lovely band of brother poems "On the Naming of Places," once inhabited, at their birth, this cottage. One winter evening in 1800, and it is a story full of Wordsworth's character, while he was labouring in his upper room at a difficult passage in "The Brothers," he started with a sudden impulse into the poem of "Hartleap Well," recited extempore the first eight stanzas, and finished it in a day or two. The poem "To a Butterfly" was made while they were at breakfast. "He ate not a morsel, but sat with his shirt-neck unbuttoned and his waistcoat opened while he did it." It was after a happy day that he wrote at night one of his few poems that deal with unhappy passion, "'Tis said that some have died for love." "Alice Fell" and "The Beggars" were dictated in the morning room, Dorothy dropping in at intervals to write them down; and "The Beggars" arose out of a chance meeting of Dorothy's with a gipsy woman at the cottage gate. Here too, and all of a sudden one March morning, he broke out into

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.

Another day, in 1802, his sister read to him in the afternoon the sonnets of Milton. As he listened, moving to and fro, he took fire and wrote three sonnets, one after another—the first, he said, he had ever written,¹—of one of which we are alone certain “I grieved for Buonaparte.” It is something to know that in this cottage his great and varied series of sonnets was begun.

In 1803—for I only mention those poems which illustrate the house—his sister Sara Hutchinson called him to the window of the cottage, saying, “Look how beautiful is yon star! It has all the sky to itself.” No sooner had he heard the words and seen the ambitious star, than the sonnet, “It is no spirit who from Heaven hath flown,” sprang, as it were from his lips—for it is one of the great mistakes the critics of Wordsworth make, that he had no rush, no spontaneity, no rapidity of verse. Numbers of the poems written at Dove Cottage gushed from him with a speed and force which belonged only to Burns and Keats out of all the great poets of this century. No sooner, in the same year, had he come back from his Scottish tour and found “Mary in perfect health, and little John

¹ See Prof. Knight's note on this statement.

asleep in the clothes basket by the fire," than he sang by the fireside "The Blind Highland Boy." The lines with which it begins—

Now we are tired of boisterous joy,
Have romped enough, my little boy ;

—are full of his homely pleasure at returning. In 1804, Townend heard "The Daffodils"; and Mary added there those two lines which are the spiritual centre of the poem. That noble piece of simple and imaginative passion which might come forth out of the voice of a primæval motherhood—"The Affliction of Margaret" was written in these rooms; where too arose the "Address to my infant daughter Dora"—a poem where all the tenderness of fatherhood and motherhood is, as it were, heard moving in the heart, and in which, with that unique felicity of his whereby he brought Nature and Humanity into union, like two clasped hands, he weaves into one the moon and the child. Here "Personal Talk" was composed, while Othello or the Faerie Queen was read. Here poems ran to and fro in Wordsworth's mind while he sat dreaming over the fire. It was his favourite custom, when evening fell,

To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint under-song.

Many other poems belong to the time before he left, and were published in the edition of 1807, but I cannot place them for a certainty in these rooms. One, however, we know, was partly composed in this house, and alone is enough to hallow its walls for ever. It is the ode concerning "Immortality and Childhood," begun—awakened, I may say, out of its sleep in his soul—on a bright May morning. It would, in truth, be an immortal pity if the spot where it rose into being was cast away by England for want of care.

When they returned after the marriage, they took up life with the same simplicity. In the midst of a household straitened for room, his poetic vein did not fail him. "The Prelude" took up a great deal of the time of 1804, and the last six books were finished in the first six months of 1805. We have that date from a letter to Sir G. Beaumont, in which he describes his orchard:—

"*June* 3, 1805.—I write to you from the moss hut at the top of my orchard, the sun just sinking

behind the hills at the front of the entrance, and his light falling on the green moss of the side opposite me. A linnet is singing in the tree above, and the children of some of our neighbours, who have been to-day little John's visitors, are playing below, equally noisy and happy. The green fields in the level area of the vale and part of the lake, lie before me in quietness. . . . I have the pleasure to say that I *finished my poem* about a fortnight ago."

Many other great poems are bound up with the house at this time. Its walls heard recited to his wife and sister the "Ode to Duty," the "Stanzas to his Brother's Death," "The Waggoner," "The Character of the Happy Warrior," and the "Force of Prayer."

In 1806 he went with his household to Coleorton. The cottage had become far too small for his increasing family; and it was almost impossible to live in it during the winter of 1806. "I cannot but admire the fortitude," Dorothy writes in 1807, "and wonder at the success, with which he has laboured in that one room, common to all the family, to all visitors, and where the children frequently play beside him." In 1807 the first

part of "The White Doe of Rylstone" was finished at Stockton, and he read it out at Dove Cottage on his return from Stockton. The rest of the poem was also finished here before he went to Allan Bank, and the first verse of the "Dedication" enshrines his happiness with Mary in the arbour of the orchard, and by the fire of the cottage, which we are desirous of making England's own.

In trellised shed with clustering roses gay,
And Mary, oft beside our blazing fire,
When years of wedded life were as a day
Whose current answers to the heart's desire,
Did we together read in Spenser's lay
How Una, sad of soul, in sad attire,
The gentle Una, of celestial birth,
To seek her knight went wandering o'er the earth.

This much then may be said concerning the poems written in the cottage during this time, and concerning their associations, and I think that together they form a body of memories and thoughts to which it is well by the purchase of this place to give a local habitation and a name; some home where we may fancy that the poems may gather—glad to see one another—and hold converse when all the world of England is asleep; for

it seems no dream to think that great poems have a being of their own, and move as they please about the place where they were born and shaped into their beauty. If the "Cuckoo" and the "Green Linnet" meet in the orchard ; if "Michael" and the "Recluse" sit over the fire by night in the upper room, they will be glad to think that their birth-place is to be theirs for ever.

There is little more to say, but I would urge this purchase from another point of view. It was during the years he was at Dove Cottage that he wrote—chiefly in the turmoil and complex wealth of London—those sonnets of his that urge upon us plain living and high thinking ; which call us back to travel on life's common way, like Milton, in cheerful godliness. It was in this house that he sang to us to find nothing so fair as the smile upon the face of duty ; to so live in obscurity, that in every difficulty and trouble we may feel like men inspired.

In poverty, in simplicity of life, in quiet duty done in obedience day by day, in love, is the strength of life. There is no greater object-lesson of this truth than Dove Cottage and Wordsworth's life in it ; no man or woman can sit for half an hour

in its rooms or walk in its narrow garden without the power of this thought coming upon him for encouragement or wise reproach. It is said that poverty chills genius and nurtures the discontent that troubles thought, that household cares in pinching circumstances injure the brightness and movement of the joyful emotion which is the fountain of poetry. This cottage is the witness to the opposite. The Wordsworths had at first barely enough to live upon. He and Dorothy had for some years about £80 a year. The rooms were as small as the rooms of a labourer's cottage. Poetry had to be made in a room which was full of interruptions. The children played there, and the cradle stood by the fire. I have said that they cooked their own dinner, tilled their own garden ; that Dorothy, with all her genius, did honest servant work—washing, baking, cleaning ; that Wordsworth chopped the wood, cleaned the well, planted the vegetables, did the work also of a labourer. Yet all the time poetry sprang up like a goddess from his head. He was gay, alive to all beauty, thrilled incessantly with the glory of the universe, able to shape all he felt into song. There is no need to point the lesson to those who spend a

life of poverty in wailing to be rich, or a life of wealth in confessing their inability to be poor. It is written in every flower of this quiet garden, in every room of this peaceful cottage.

Nor does it speak less plainly to a world which strives at every point to fly away from simplicity of life. Luxury, complexity of amusement or of knowledge, to be removed as far as possible from the natural roots of life—these things are too much thought to bring happiness, culture, and honour. To stand in the porch of Dove Cottage is enough to teach us another lesson. Happiness was there, and good society, few books but fine culture, and honour laid its garland on the humble roof—yet the life was as simple, as settled in a round of daily duties, as that of any shepherd in the dale; lived close to natural beauty, among the birds and flowers of the woodland, among poor neighbours, with the common pleasures and common loves of men. And out of it arose a new poetry—a power which will draw after it for ever the hearts of men, a voice which always calls us to live with those great laws which never grow old, for an immortal God is in them

Nor can we forget that here Love dwelt—the

sacred love of home and of its duties, that touchstone of a nation's strength, the foundation of the love of country and of all other love; the check of all base affections; the root of temperance in passion; the harbour where our storm-tossed bark lies in peace and refits for a fresh voyage. There is scarcely one of the affections of home which is not represented with beauty, with a certain tenderness of romance, in the little cottage during those eight years—the love of husband and wife, of father and mother, of brother and brother, of sister and brother; and this kind of love, of which modern literature speaks so little, Wordsworth clothed with the sun, and brought into union with all the pomp and beauty of the elements. It was this that enabled him to be the poet of the poor, to see in lives lived in the common daylight of events and work subjects for verse, and to connect them also with the majesty of Nature.

Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

The cottage is a living witness to this thought, and

to this love ; and it is well to preserve the little place, that England may not forget the wisdom of the love, and the passion of the thought ; even more, that she may have some form to clothe the historic truth, that out of this feeling and this conception grew a new type of song. Here, in this home, was shaped into full beauty that living Being of Poetry, which, first born in the " Lyrical Ballads " of 1798, kindled with her fresh eyes, and with her simple and tuneful voice, a fresh life in all whom the Muses loved in England.

It is enough to say, but there is one more ground of appeal. There are thousands whose lives have been soothed and dignified, whose holidays in England have been charmed, whose soul has been purified, whose love of beauty has been made temperate, clear and deep by Wordsworth, and who owe to him an infinite debt. They may be sure that he would be glad that their gratitude should preserve his humble home for England. For he dearly loved the place. He never gave to Rydal Mount half the romantic love his youth gave to Dove Cottage ; it would stir his heart with pleasure to know that England also loved the orchard, the garden, and the rooms where his heart was once so

happy ; that she honoured his poetry in the way in which he would best like it honoured.

No record of his love for this home of his is fuller, sweeter or more intimate than the "Farewell" of 1802, with which I close this little Book, and by whose appealing verses I again recommend this purchase.

*Composed just before my Sister and I went to fetch Mrs.
Wordsworth from Gallow Hill, near Scarborough.*

Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain-ground,
Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
Of that magnificent temple which doth bound
One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare ;
Sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair,
The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,
Farewell !—we leave thee to Heaven's peaceful care,
Thee, and the Cottage which thou dost surround.

Our boat is safely anchored by the shore,
And there will safely ride when we are gone ;
The flowering shrubs that deck our humble door
Will prosper, though untended and alone :
Fields, goods, and far-off chattels we have none :
These narrow bounds contain our private store
Of things earth makes, and sun doth shine upon ;
Here are they in our sight—we have no more.

Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell !
For two months now in vain we shall be sought :
We leave you here in solitude to dwell
With these our latest gifts of tender thought ;
Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell !
Whom from the borders of the Lake we brought,
And placed together near our rocky Well.

We go for One to whom ye will be dear ;
And she will prize this Bower, this Indian shed,
Our own contrivance, Building without peer !
—A gentle Maid, whose heart is lowly bred,
Whose pleasures are in wild fields gathered,
With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer
Will come to you ; to you herself will wed ;
And love the blessed life that we lead here.

Dear Spot ! which we have watched with tender heed
Bringing thee chosen plants and blossoms blown
Among the distant mountains, flower and weed,
Which thou hast taken to thee as thy own,
Making all kindness registered and known ;
Thou for our sakes, though Nature's child indeed,
Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need.

And O most constant, yet most fickle Place,
That hast thy wayward moods, as thou dost show
To them who look not daily on thy face ;
Who, being loved, in love no bounds dost know,
And say'st, when we forsake thee, " Let them go !
Thou easy-hearted Thing, with thy wild race
Of weeds and flowers, till we return be slow,
And travel with the year at a soft pace.

Help us to tell Her tales of years gone by,
And this sweet spring, the best beloved and best ;
Joy will be flown in its mortality ;
Something must stay to tell us of the rest.
Here, thronged with primroses, the steep rock's breast
Glittered at evening like a starry sky ;
And in this bush our sparrow built her nest,
Of which I sang one song that will not die.

O happy Garden ! whose seclusion deep
Hath been so friendly to industrious hours ;
And to soft slumbers, that did gently steep
Our spirits, carrying with them dreams of flowers,
And wild notes warbled among leafy bowers ;
Two burning months let summer overleap,
And, coming back with Her who will be ours,
Into thy bosom we again shall creep.

APPENDIX



APPENDIX

It may give an additional literary interest to Dove Cottage, and especially in the case of those persons who care more for fine prose than for fine poetry, if we remember how intimately it became connected with De Quincey. In the latter months of 1809 Dorothy Wordsworth was actively employed in carpeting, furnishing, and getting ready the Cottage for De Quincey. In November 1809, when he was twenty-four years old, he took up his residence within its walls. "For twenty-seven years he held it in tenancy, and for a little more than twenty years it was his head-quarters, the place where he resided constantly when he was at rest. The mile of road from the Cottage to Wordsworth's house of Allan Bank was his familiar walk morning and evening from the first, for the sake of Wordsworth's society, and also of Coleridge's, so long as Coleridge remained Wordsworth's guest."¹

This closeness of friendship between him and Wordsworth diminished after 1810, but they remained friends

¹ "De Quincey." Masson, p. 45-49.

till De Quincey left for Scotland in 1829. Dorothy and the Wordsworth children, however, grew nearer and nearer to him as time went on.

During his occupation of the Cottage, one of his most frequent visitors was John Wilson of Elleray, who, as Masson cleverly says, "rather bounded into the Lake District than settled in it." But De Quincey had few visitors—he was an almost solitary student, lost as it were among the mountains, buried in his books. He must have filled every room in the cottage with them, for he made a library of 5,000 volumes, many of which overflowed into the cottage of Nab Scar, about a mile away, where his father-in-law lived. It was here that till 1812 he read in comfort German metaphysics, and every Saturday night enjoyed his opium, cosily drinking it out of a decanter, over the fire in that upper room of which so much has been said. It was here in 1813 that he became a confirmed opium eater, consuming every day 8,000 drops of laudanum, enough to fill about seven ordinary wine glasses. A few years afterwards the torments began he so vividly recorded. It was at the gate of this cottage he met the Malay who figured so often in his Asiatic dreams, and became one of the horrors of his nights. The kitchen is the stage of that strange interview which stands out, like an impressionist picture, from the pages of "The Confessions of an Opium Eater."

These associations I have kept apart from the Wordsworth story, but they will add to many a new charm to the Cottage. It is an island of literature, and I match, in conclusion, Dorothy's description at page 47 with

De Quincey's picture of Dove Cottage as it was in 1816 :—

Let there be a cottage, standing in a valley, eighteen miles from any town ; no spacious valley, but about two miles long by three-quarters of a mile in average width—the benefit of which provision is that all families resident within its circuit will comprise, as it were, one larger household, personally familiar to your eye, and more or less interesting to your affections. Let the mountains be real mountains, between 3,000 and 4,000 feet high, and the cottage a real cottage, not (as a witty author has it) “a cottage with a double coach-house,” let it be in fact (for I must abide by the actual scene) a white cottage, embowered with flowering shrubs, so chosen as to unfold a succession of flowers upon the walls, and clustering around the windows, through all the months of spring, summer, and autumn ; beginning, in fact, with May roses, and ending with jasmine. Let it, however, *not* be spring, nor summer, nor autumn, but winter in its sternest shape. . . . But here, to save myself the trouble of too much verbal description, I will introduce a painter, and give him directions for the rest of the picture. Painters do not like white cottages, unless a good deal weather-stained ; but, as the reader now understands that it is a winter night, his services will not be required except for the *inside* of the house. Paint me, then, a room seventeen feet by twelve, and not more than seven and a half feet high. This, reader, is somewhat ambitiously styled, in my family, the drawing-room ; but, being contrived “a double debt to pay,” it is also, and more justly termed the library ; for it happens that books are the

only article of property in which I am richer than my neighbours. Of these, I have 'about 5,000, collected gradually since my eighteenth year. Therefore, Painter, put as many as you can into this room. Make it populous with books; and furthermore, paint me a good fire, and furniture plain and modest, befitting the unpretending cottage of a scholar. And near the fire paint me a tea-table; and (as it is clear that no creature can come to see me on such a stormy night) place only two cups and saucers on the tea-tray: and if you know how to paint such a thing, symbolically or otherwise, paint me an eternal tea-pot,—eternal, a *parte ante*, and, a *parte post*; for I usually drink tea from eight o'clock at night to four in the morning.

And as it is very unpleasant to make tea or to pour it out for oneself, paint me a lovely young woman sitting at the table. Paint her arms like Aurora's and her smiles like Hebe's; but no, dear M——! (this is Margaret Simpson, his wife) not even in jest let me insinuate that thy power to illuminate my cottage rests upon a tenure so perishable as mere personal beauty, or that the witchcraft of angelic smiles lies within the empire of any earthly pencil. Pass then, my good Painter, to something more within thy power; and the next article brought forward should naturally be myself—a picture of the Opium Eater, "with his little golden receptacle of the pernicious drug" lying beside him on the table. As to the opium I have no objection to see a picture of *that*; you may paint it, if you choose; but I apprise you that no "little" receptacle would, even in 1816, answer my purpose, who was at a distance from the stately Pantheon and all druggists, neutral or otherwise. No, you may as

well paint the real receptacle, which was not of gold, but of glass, and as much like a sublunary wine-decanter as possible. In fact, one day, by a series of happily conceived experiments, I discovered that it *was* a decanter. Into this you may put a quart of ruby-coloured laudanum ; that, and a book of German metaphysics placed by its side, will sufficiently attest my being in the neighbourhood.

This homelike, weird, and wintry orgie, with the solitary quiet of an opium dream wrapt round it, is an image for the mind to rest on strangely different from those pictures which we have made of this room when Wordsworth and Dorothy and Mary sat round its fire and listened to "The Ode to Duty" and the "Character of the Happy Warrior." The little room is the same, the firelight, the winter wind without ; the quiet figures resemble one another ; the literary life and its elements continue to fill the upper chamber, but the temper of the one home is remote from that of the other. Wordsworth, in all matters, and especially in matters of appetite was the bondman of duty. De Quincey, though afterwards he fought a good fight, was at Dove Cottage the victim of indulgence. Yet so great was his genius, and so attractive the man, and the superb prose he afterwards wrote so great a legacy to the English language, that we are glad to see his thin, dark and lovable face, with all his books looking down upon it, in this room ; and the vision—so distinct from that of Wordsworth that they do not clash with one another—enhances rather than lessens our desire to possess and guard the place.

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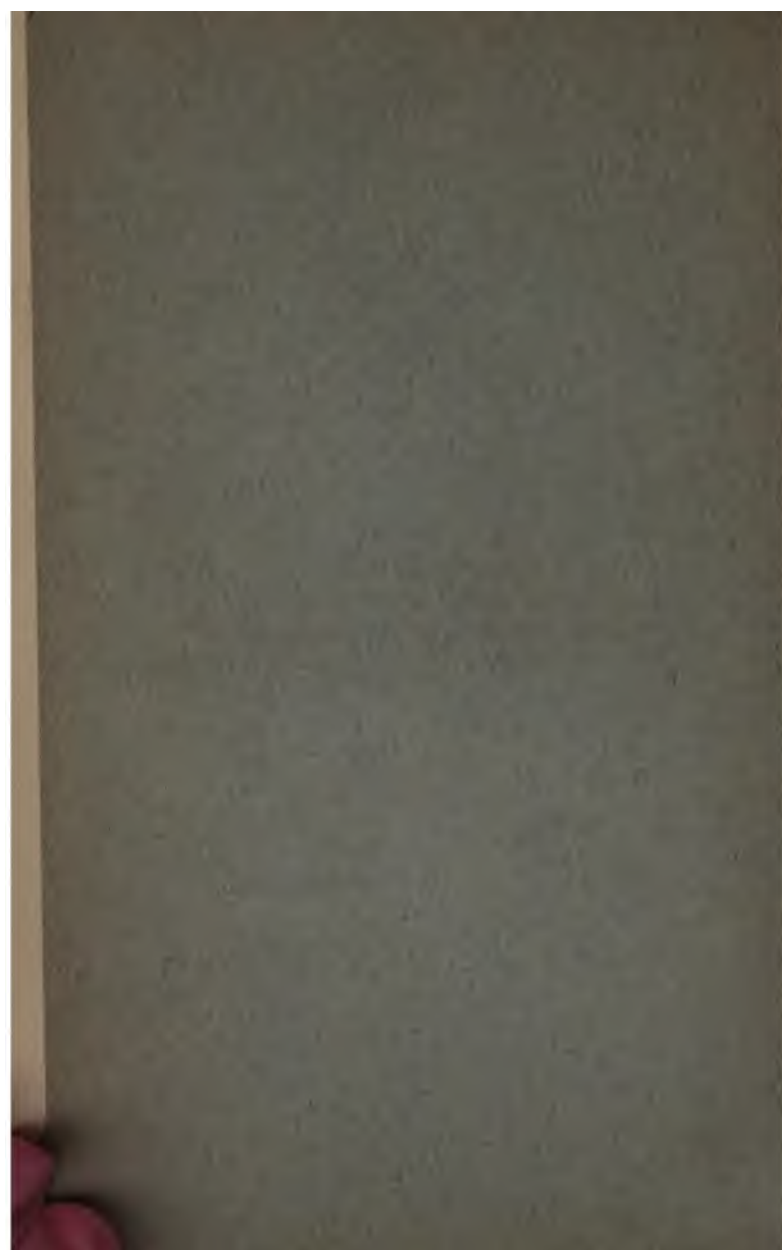
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